Accessibility Checklist for Autism Related Meetings

Inviting autistic people to participate in meetings that will potentially affect the lives of autistic people might seem obvious, but still doesn’t always happen. Making sure autistics are included is an important first step, but just being there isn’t enough. Provide equal access to autistic group members by following these suggestions.

Also consider the numbers of autistic people present. If there are 2 autistic people and 20 non-autistic people in an autism related meeting, you might want to consider whether you are practicing tokenism or inclusion.

Sensory Accessibility

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| Barrier | Result | Suggestion for accessibility | Possible Self-accommodation |
| Fluorescent lights | Buzzing, glaring, flickering  Note: flickering can seriously injure a person with epilepsy. | Natural light if window is available; otherwise, lamps.  Ask if everyone is okay with the lighting. | Sunglasses |
| Noise (scraping chairs, squeaking markers, feedback from sound systems, etc.) | Pain ranging from mild to unbearable | Use a whiteboard instead of paper.  Choose locations with carpet.  Be careful when plugging/unplugging and give warning.  Avoid eating noisy foods like apples. | Headphones |
| Smells | Nausea, allergies to scented products | Do not eat tuna sandwich in the meeting; consider making your meeting scent-free; | We will want to get away from you, but that would appear rude, wouldn’t it? |
| Touch/proximity | Anxiety, panic | Provide sufficient space between chairs.  Consider leaving preferred seating for autistic members (near door, end of row, back row.) | May need to relocate to floor or stand; may need to walk around room or take frequent breaks. |

Cognitive Accessibility

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| Noise (too many people talking at once) | Inability to process | Establish meeting rules or code of conduct; remind members. |  |
| Jargon and acronyms | Inability to understand, disconnect from meeting | Use plain language where possible.  Otherwise define on first use. | Interrupt to ask as needed. |
| Wordy documents | Exclusion of some people with ID and/or significant executive functioning issues | Use plan language where possible. Provide all documents to participants in advance of meeting. |  |

Social/Communication Accessibility

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| Identifying participants | Damage to relationships due to prosopagnosia (face blindness) | Name tags or cards. |  |
| Greetings (handshake) | Discomfort | Ask before offering handshake |  |
| Chit-chat before and after meeting | Anxiety | Understand that not participating in chit-chat may not be an option for all. Include others by slowing down the conversation. | Come late to meeting and/or leave early. |
| Conversation moves too fast | Exclusion of people with slower processing time | Slow. Down. Please.  Allow time between comments. Look to see if someone else might be wanting to contribute. | Interrupt as needed. |
| Turn taking  (Many autistic people cannot identify when their turn to speak.) | Exclusion. | Provide cards to indicate interest in speaking. | Interrupt as needed |
| Participants use only speech to communicate | Exclusion of people who need other means of communication | Use real time speech to text software (available in PPT) |  |
| Cameras | Anxiety, seizure trigger if flash used | Ask all participants before using |  |